

UN Human Rights Council 45: Joint Commonwealth Statement, Item 10 General Debate

Madam President,

I am reading this statement on behalf of the 54 member states of the Commonwealth* as current Chair-in-office. This is the first time the Commonwealth has addressed the Council as a group.

Members of the Commonwealth have common bonds and common histories, but also incredible diversity. Our collective population amounts to 2.4 billion people, across the globe, from some of the largest countries in the world, to some of the smallest, including many small island developing states. 9 of our members currently serve on the Human Rights Council.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in 2018 we reaffirmed our shared commitment to work together within a rules based international system to address shared global challenges and to foster a fairer, more secure, more sustainable and more prosperous future. We recalled the Commonwealth's proud history of acting to strengthen good governance and the rule of law, to protect and promote democratic principles and human rights, to promote peace and security and to strengthen democratic institutions. We emphasised that the full social, economic and political participation of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status, is essential for democracy and sustainable development to thrive.

This commitment takes into account the special requirements of least developed countries, and of small and otherwise vulnerable economies, and it benefits all our citizens and the wider world. Small States, and Small Island Developing States continue to be disproportionately affected by natural disasters, climate change, and a lack of human and institutional capacity.

We recognise that concerted action is required to address the unique challenges and vulnerability of small states to ensure their full participation in and contribution to a more prosperous future. All states, irrespective of size or resources should be able to participate at the Human Rights Council and more broadly at the multilateral mechanisms in Geneva and New York. This increases the legitimacy of these forums and makes them more representative of the international community.

Upon the request of states, the Commonwealth small states offices in Geneva and New York supports Commonwealth Member States in the multilateral arena.

The strength of the Commonwealth lies in the collaboration that takes place among our diverse member states, and we recognise that at the multilateral level, such collaboration and support is essential to protect and promote the

Commonwealth cornerstones of democracy, human rights, peace, and security. In this regard, we reaffirm that the Commonwealth way is to seek consensus through consultation and the sharing of experience, especially through practical cooperation.

These values and principles are enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter, and the Commonwealth and its members will continue to demonstrate these values in Geneva at the Human Rights Council.

*This statement is on behalf of the 54 member states of the Commonwealth: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Dominica, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Kenya, Kingdom of eSwatini, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and The Grenadines, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu and Zambia.